DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 050 365 CG 006 365

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TITLE	Decreasing Student Alienation in Higher Education: One View.
INSTITUTION	American Coll. Personnel Association, Washington, D.C.; Toledo Univ., Ohio.
PUB DATE	5 Apr 71
NOTE	13p.; Paper presented at the American College Personnel Association Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, April 4-8, 1971
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	College Students, *Higher Education, *Student Alienation, *Student College Relationship, *Student Needs, *Student Personnel Services, Student Personnel Work, Student Teacher Relationship, Teacher Behavior

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the issue of how to decrease student alienation in higher education. Its focus is on the quality of the relationship between instructor and students, which is characterized by the student's involvement in the subject matter while, simultaneously, being offered the potential for personal interest by the instructor. This writer maintains that this existential relationship of openness to and acceptance of the other is a relationship of dialogue that should transcend the formalism within our system of education and that the student personnel administrator is in a position to become the catalyst to encourage, permit, and provide the context within which individuals in the university community can relate to each other as individuals. (Author/TA)

ED050365

"Decreasing Student Alienation in Higher Education: One View"

A Paper Presented to the American College Personnel Association

Atlantic City, New Jersey

April 5, 1971

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Ferment is present on most college and university campuses today. In some ways more than ever before, the goals, structures, and hallowed traditions of American higher education are being challenged and rethought. Confusion, distrust, and polorization are becoming increasingly common.

The issues are many: First, the question of the proper response of the academic community to the Black or traditionally "non-qualified" student remains in doubt despite the fact that there is much which could be accomplished on most campuses quickly and effectively.[1] Second, the need for a more adequate base for funding threatens the very existence of not only some innovational or exploratory programs, but also some institutions themselves.[2] Third, faculty are aware of increasing societal and political demands for "better instruction" yet frustrated as the real rewards and security at most institutions remains in research and publication. Fourth, it seems clear that not a few administrators are also more frustrated in this period which others have characterized as one of transition, when "procedures" are constantly changing and no one seems to offer consistent, clear council on how to handle things. Many speak, criticism of higher education is increasingly common, but little is done.

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[1]cf. W. Frank Hull IV. "The Liberal Arts College and the Black Student." CRITIQUE, III, 1 (January, 1971); Richard L. Ferrin. "Developmental Programs in Midwestern Community Colleges." Higher Education Surveys #4, College Entrance Examination Board (February, 1971); Robert A. Altman and Patricia O. Snyder, Eds. The Minority Student on the Campus. Boulder: WICHE, 1970. cf. esp. 33-60, 125-156, 179-188.

[2]cf. William W. Jellema. The Red and the Black. Washington, D. C.: Association of American Colleges, 1970; Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. Toward an Effective Utilization of Independent Colleges and Universities by the State of Ohio. Columbus: Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, 1971; Earl F. Cheit. The New Depression in Higher Education. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971, Carnegie Commission on Higher Education.

In the midst of all this, a fifth issue must still be seriously considered--that of the student and his feelings; for surely, one of the clearest purposes of higher education in the United States has always been to teach students, be they an elite few or a more representative plurality.

Student "riots" or "disorders" may command the acute attention of the popular media, but such are not new to higher education. They may even be said to illustrate that as either people or institutions, we seem not to have progressed very far. Scholars typically argue that the modern university had its prototype in the medieval institutions of Paris, Bologna, and Salerno. This being the case, we do well to remember that in 1199 (1200), feelings over allegedly poor wine served to the manservant of the German bishop-elect of Liège (then a student at the University of Paris) developed into a town and gown "campus disturbance" that ended with several students killed or wounded.[3] In 1823, half of Harvard's graduating seniors were expelled after "protests" over Harvard's inflexible curriculum and _in loco parentis_ policies. Difficulties at the University of Virginia in 1836 were followed by a student celebration of those disturbances four years later (1840) which resulted in one professor's being shot and killed.[4] Indeed, a history of American higher education from the perspective of its "student disorders" could be written.[5] But while the fact of a disruption is not unique, the issues propelling some students to violence are.

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[3] cf. Roger de Hoveden. _Chronica_. W. Stubbs, ed., Rolls Series IV. London, 1871, 120-121.

[4] cf. C. F. Thwing. _College Administration_. New York: The Century Company, 1900, 119-127.

[5] cf. Alma D. M. Bevis. _Diets and Riots_. Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1936.

The present increase in both gross numbers and proportion of young people enrolled in institutions of higher education, coupled with increased anticipation concerning what to expect from colleges and universities seems likely to insure that there will continue to be an increased number of problems on the campus should all else remain constant. While colleges enrolled but 1.25% of the 18-22 year olds in 1868, 1970 saw 40+% of the 18-22 year olds enrolled. Elementary children are often primed by teachers and parents with the goal of college admission and how hard and demanding the work will be. After years of anticipation, is it any wonder that many are disappointed or bored? Teaching methods are antiquated, curricula sometimes purely tradition, and student involvement in most institutions, where it is beginning at all, is minimal (maybe rightly so).[6]

Presently, another issue that must be considered in discussions on college students for at least the next four to five years is that of drug usage. Some faculty members do use various drugs with students in a misguided attempt to gain "rapport." Informally, drugs are available just about anywhere today. Drugs may be but one way that an individual student attempts to cope with his own alienation from many things, or they may be part of a search for a periodic escape. Hopefully, addicting drugs will not be a continuing problem, but clearly they are now, and to deny this may not only be utter foolishness, but also criminal.

So here we sit in America, where as one foreign observer not totally sarcastically put it, "the extreme cases, naturally enough, come from."[7] One does not even need to "prove" that many students are alienated at their institutions.

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[6]cf. Lewis B. Mayhew. Arrogance on Campus. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1970, 47-61.

[7]Hugh Trevor-Roper. The Revolt of Youth: Society's Cancer or Its Cure?" Realities (April, 1968), 52.

We all know that. Yet, it is the student personnel administrator, be he Vice President, Dean or dormitory counselor, who is commonly expected by the larger university community to do something about all these problems. Student alienation is a symptom, not a cause.

"Decreasing student alienation" may even be an inappropriate goal. We live, at least an increasing number of us live, in areas of population concentration where people themselves are more and more commonly alienated from one another, and from their daily tasks. There is a wide gap in thought and opinion between the "average" citizen and young people. In our society, people seem anything but secure and "self-fulfilled." If this is the society for which we prepare students, then possibly training in an alienating institution of higher education is a proper education for life in an alienating society.

The freshman student at an eastern college mirrored one, possibly not too extreme, position within the suspicions of many of our society's members when he responded to a researcher's inquiries by asking, "Why does a busy professor keep his door open to talk with any student who wants to bother him? What does he want?"[8]

I assume, however, that educators are not willing to settle for a societal status quo; but instead, that one of the aims of higher education is to develop as a consequence of more college-educated graduates, a better society in which we all might live. Hence, the academic discussion as to whether the institution is concerned primarily with the "transmission of knowledge" or the "personal development of the individual"[9] is just that:

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[8]Douglas H. Heath. Growing Up In College. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1968, 69.

[9]also conceptualized as "transmission" versus "induction," "knowledge-centered" versus "student-centered," or "authoritarian education" versus "permissive education."

academic nit picking. In reality, these cannot be separated. No matter how the college or university conducts its affairs or its teaching, the institution, through its program or simply its milieu, will have some effect through commission or omission, positively or negatively, great or slight, on both the students' knowledge and personal development. In order to maximize what we generally refer to as "education" in the most positive way possible for each individual student, the efforts of student personnel administrators at any level to decrease student alienation can only be applauded by the total academic community and the society at large.

But how do we decrease student alienation?

Remember for a moment that often-quoted comment of President James A. Garfield, categorizing an ideal education as a log with a student on one end and Professor Mark Hopkins on the other.[10] The modern corollary of this is not one teacher to each student, as is generally assumed, and it may even have little positive correlation to low faculty-student ratios or cluster colleges per se. It is clearly not the numbers involved, but what happens between the instructor and his students--be they one to one or one to three thousand. Each of us can cite examples where a particular man, no doubt with some flare for the theatrical, has excited students by the droves in large lecture classes, while another highly recognized scholar in a particular area can bore students to death no matter how few of them sit before him. The individual himself can often excite or "inspire" learning, but the crucial factor is the quality of the relationship between instructor and students. The characteristics of such a positive relationship are that

[10] cf. Frederick Rudolph. Mark Hopkins and the Log. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956, 48-52. Hopkins was known for his interaction with students on his ideas.

the student is involved in the subject matter and simultaneously offered the potential for the personal interest of the instructor. In other words, the relationship provides the potential for the security of feeling that someone does care and is interested in "my" views and feelings. When such does occur--and admittedly this traditionally may be very infrequent, the motivation is there for academic inquiry plus the opportunity for personal development and maturing. The absence of such a relationship for many students is illustrated on many campuses in the demand for sensitivity groups and help centers, and the rise of communes and other groups.

Typically it is held that faculty-student relationships and student-student peer relationships will occur on a residential campus where a "collegiate atmosphere" prevails.[11] As one provost accurately pointed out to his faculty, "(The residential liberal arts college) ... grants a man special access to teachers and students he could never otherwise have, and, moreover, it provides for informal associations that may eventually be more important for his growth than the formal ones (i.e., classroom contact hours)."[12]

On the other hand, I would argue that it is falacious to assume that the same needs which students are thought to possess at the residential campus are not also present on the large urban commuter university campus where students are presumed only interested in "stopping by" for a class, and more interested in an outside job or vocational future.

At one urban university with a total enrollment of 14,410 students, having only 999 students in residence (7%), a random sample of 117 undergraduates was interviewed by phone. The sample was proportionately repre-

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[11]cf. Charles D. Bolton and Kenneth C. W. Kammeyer. The University Student. A Study of Student Behavior and Values. New Haven: College and University Press, 1967, where the factor of the amount of time a student spends in various activities at a resident-oriented campus is pursued.

[12]Bruce Haywood, Provost of Kenyon College (March 15, 1971).

sentative of major enrollment categories at this particular institution, as established by a random selection of four-year undergraduate degree-seeking students.[13] To illustrate briefly the general findings, 54.6% said that they knew a faculty member well enough to stop by his office "just to chat." Only 31.1% of the freshman sample felt that way, while 70.6% of the seniors so indicated. However, 96.5% of all of the students indicated that they would like to know a faculty member this well. To look at these figures another way, 93.3% of the freshman sample and 100% of the seniors thought that they would like to know a faculty member well enough to stop by his office "just to chat." By college of enrollment, 92.5% of those in The College of Arts and Sciences, 100% of those in The College of Education, 91.7% of those in The College of Business Administration, and 100% of those in the College of Engineering thought that they would like to know a faculty member well enough to stop by his office "just to chat." Corollary questions (Table I) support this trend of about 50% of these urban undergraduates

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Insert Table I about here.

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reporting involvement with faculty in various ways while at the same time, around 90% of these same students would have liked to experience such a

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[13]Forty-five were freshmen; 28, sophomores; 27, juniors; 17, seniors; 40 from The College of Arts and Sciences; 41, from The College of Education; 11, from The College of Engineering; and 24, from The College of Business Administration. (One student was in none of the above colleges.) The sample was drawn from the student directory through the use of a table of random numbers after removing all graduate students and two-year, degree-seeking students, February, 1971. A structured telephone interview was the source for the data. Although the analysis of the data is incomplete, the work of the following on this study should be acknowledged: Bernice C. Donovan, Phyllis L. Feeney, Suzette Gebolys, Carolyn George, Hugh M. Lindsey, and Roger Ridgway.

relationship, or a deeper relationship, with faculty in these areas. As is to be expected, a higher percentage of seniors than freshmen reported experiencing personal relationships with at least one faculty member, and there were differences in the amount of reported relationships with faculty members within individual colleges. Clearly though, the general trend among these urban students was in the direction of feeling that deeper and more personal relationships were desirable.[14] We need to rethink our assumptions as to what undergraduate students on predominantly commuting campuses are looking for today.

In short, there is an existential relationship that can properly exist between individuals traditionally separated by all the formalism within our system of education (and even more so within the British educational system) that sets teacher apart from, and in some senses, above student. This is a relationship of openness to the other, and acceptance. This is precisely an existential encounter exactly of the form and nature that an increasing number of college-age students are seeking. It is, in fact, a relationship of dialogue.[15] Evidence for this is beginning to appear. In at least one "experimental college" program within a more traditional university, an evaluator comments:

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[14]This seems to contrast what some other researchers have parenthetically implied in the past. cf. Kenneth A. Feldman and Theodore M. Newcomb. The Impact of College on Students. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Inc., 1969, vol. I, pp. 248-258, vol II, 158-162. Joseph Katz. "Four Years of Growth, Conflict, and Compliance." No Time For Youth. J. Katz et al., eds. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1968, 26-27. Katz does conclude, rightly I think, that "It is the nature of the contact, not its frequency, that is critical." (p. 27)

[15]cf. Reuel L. Howe. The Miracle of Dialogue. New York: Seabury Press, 1963, esp. pp. 16-17, 77-78, 97-99. cf. also Arthur W. Chickering's comments on faculty/administrator relationships with students in "Faculty and Administration," Education and Identity. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1969, esp. pp. 237-252.

> "(experimental college) students ... were not necessarily in love with all the fellows, but most all would attest to having the feeling that there was at least one fellow they could approach directly with personal questions .... A true testimony to the effectiveness of this relationship is the fact that the (experimental college) students issued a universal cry for more contact with faculty. 'I wish they could be around more in the evenings when they and I both feel more relaxed and free' was a repeated comment of the (experimental college) student. This also suggests that this type of informal personal contact met a profound need among the students."[16]

My point: The student personnel administrator is in an ideal position to provide the potential for such an educational relationship to occur, if not to participate in it himself. Faculty will not change traditional ways easily and our tradition is not one of much involvement. Those faculty individuals who have naturally taught in this way will continue. Those who have not will not likely begin, even if "in service training" programs are instituted--in fact, such faculty will not likely even raise the question. The student personnel administrator can provide the context.

1. Set up or discover natural places of contact or issues involving both students and faculty and then see what can be done to encourage them.

2. Look for the "natural" guys on the faculty who can be involved.

3. Be careful to utilize small numbers of individuals with common points where possible and appropriate, to encourage interaction.

4. Do not be afraid of structuring beginning interaction.

5. Lead the way in example by your own relationships to students.

6. Risk some wild ideas now and then.

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[16]Robert D. Brown. "Student Development in the Centennial College: A First Year Look." University of Nebraska (October, 1970), 8.

For example, one institution has regularized a procedure whereby it is announced and posted in a dormitory that a particular individual faculty member or administrator will be in the dormitory that evening. If a student is interested in meeting this individual, he leaves his room door open wide. The faculty or administrator simply walks through the hall. It sounds absurd, and full of reasons to anticipate that nothing will happen. Yet, on that campus, one academic dean who found himself in a small residence hall on this basis, was still there at 5:00 A. M. and he never progressed beyond a single floor of the residence!

A second example: Two male graduate students were eating lunch in a noisy crowded student-union cafeteria one afternoon, when a slightly stocky man with balding hair came up to two coeds at the next table and asked if he could join them. One of the graduate students commented loudly enough to be overheard about that "dirty old man." With a slight smile, that "dirty old man" turned to the two male graduate students and asked if they would like to join them all. By way of introduction, he simply said, "I'm John Oswald." That was the man who had just become President of The Pennsylvania State University, and that is precisely the type of out-going humble interest that is characteristic of the type of relationship I am advocating. Offices were made for working in, but there is more to effective work with students today than mere reading books or writing memos.

Finally, do not be fooled into believing that the urban university student has no needs or interests beyond straight academics at the institution. Clearly, there is a great deal to be done to personalize the urban campus. Hopefully, the student personnel administrators will begin to experiment

with genuine attempts to humanize us all--faculty, students, staff, and administrators. The student personnel administrator is in a position to become the catalist to encourage, permit, and provide the context in which individuals within the university community can begin to relate to each other as precisely that, individuals.

Table I
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ATTITUDES
ON SELECTED ISSUES OF STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS
AT AN URBAN, COMMUTING UNIVERSITY

ITEM	Total Student Sample	Percentage of "yes" response By Class		By College*			
		Freshmen	Seniors	Arts & Sci.	Educ.	Bus. Adm.	Engr.
Do you know a faculty member well enough to stop by his office "just to chat?"	54.6	31.1	70.6	42.5	60.9	54.2	27.3
Would you like to?	96.5	93.3	100.0	92.5	100.0	91.7	100.0
Could you say that you have established a close relationship with at least one of your professors here?	46.2	33.3	52.9	37.5	43.9	50.0	45.5
Would you like to have had that happen?	90.3	88.9	94.1	87.5	92.7	83.3	100.0
Do you know a faculty member whom you could call "a friend?"	51.8	42.2	70.6	37.5	58.5	45.8	54.5
Would you like to?	92.0	93.3	100.0	95.0	90.2	83.3	100.0
Does any professor know you well enough to provide a fair character reference?	52.0	31.1	52.9	50.0	53.7	45.8	18.2
Would you like to be known that well by any of them?	95.6	93.3	100.0	92.5	97.6	95.8	90.0
Can you say that at least one of your teachers here was interested not only in your academic achievements but also in your personal goals and concerns?	56.1	46.7	64.7	57.5	48.8	54.2	54.5
Would you like to have such a teacher?	93.1	97.8	100.0	95.0	92.7	87.5	100.0
N=	117	45	17	40	41	24	11

*One student was in the process of changing college enrollments and thus not counted.